

**Remarks to the National Association of Counties***March 5, 1996*

Thank you very much. Thank you, Doug Bovin. Thank you, Michael Hightower. I have enjoyed working with Doug. I know I will enjoy working with Michael, and I enjoy working with all of you.

I want to talk to you today about our partnership. And we were joking outside—I know that in some States, the States may be too big for the person running for Governor to basically operate from county courthouse to county courthouse, but I never found that an obstacle at home. And I feel right at home here, and I thank you for your warm welcome.

Before I begin my remarks to you I feel obliged to say, because this is my first public appearance of the day, that I'm sure that all of you as Americans share my outrage at the campaign of terror which is being directed at the people of Israel. These are desperate and fanatic acts aimed not just at killing innocent people, including innocent children, but at killing the growing prospects for peace in the Middle East. They must not succeed.

Today I'm announcing a series of steps to support the fight against future terrorist attacks, to bring killers to justice, and to rally support for peace in the Middle East. These steps include immediate emergency transfer to Israel of highly sophisticated detection equipment; the dispatch of American specialists to work with their Israeli counterparts on strengthening antiterrorism measures; the development of a comprehensive package of training, technical assistance, and equipment to improve antiterrorism cooperation among Israel, the Palestinians, and other governments in the region; and contact with foreign governments to ask for their help in the fight for peace and against terrorism. The United States has always stood with the people of Israel through good times and bad, and we stand with them today.

Let me say that in so many ways your work is the polar opposite of the extremism which threatens to tear apart the fabric of so many societies in the world today. When you walk out of your office the great challenges of our time confront you with human faces. You

have no choice but to reach out to your fellow citizens and to try to work together to meet those challenges. As the great former mayor of New York City, Fiorello La Guardia, once said, there is, after all, no Republican or Democratic way to clean the streets. You have shown what can be accomplished if people put aside their differences and work together. And I hope while you're here you'll remind every elected official in Washington that we, too, can do our job here if we do it together.

I came into this community and into my job with a very straightforward vision. I wanted to make sure that our country would go into the 21st century with the American dream alive and well for every single American willing to work for it. I wanted our country to remain the strongest force for peace and freedom, for security and prosperity in the post-cold-war world. And above all, I wanted to see this country come together around our basic values and our mutual respect for one another.

Our strategy started with a commitment to grow the economy to create economic opportunity. In the last 3 years, we have worked on getting the deficit down, interest rates down, investment in our people up, opportunities for Americans to sell their goods and services all across the world up; our commitment to technology, to research, to breaking the barriers to economic opportunity for all Americans up.

In the last 3 years we've made some notable progress. Americans have created almost 8 million new jobs. We have the lowest combined rates of unemployment and inflation in 27 years. Homeownership is at a 15-year high. For the first time in many years, average earnings are going up, and for the first time in many years our exports are growing faster than our imports. Our auto industry leads the world again, and for 2 years in a row, after many years on the back benches, an international economic forum has said that America is the world's most productive economy.

For 3 years in a row, our people have set successive records for starting new businesses. We're also beginning to come together around our basic values. The crime rate, the welfare and food stamp rolls, the

poverty rate, the teen pregnancy rate are all coming down in America, thanks in no small measure to the labors that many of you carry on in communities dealing with these challenges every day.

But if you take a full accounting of America's picture, you have to take the challenges along with the successes. We know still, in spite of the fact that our economy has produced 8 million new jobs, almost—and I might say, just to give you an idea of the magnitude of that achievement, the G-7 economies, the world's big seven economies, in the last 3 years have created, net, a total of 7.7 million new jobs. And America has created 7.7 million new jobs. The other six have created some—some have created some, some have lost. Their net is zero.

It is not easy for wealthy countries to create new jobs. The United States has been doing that, and we can be proud of the people who are doing it, almost exclusively in the private sector with the environment that has been created and the work that they do. Still we know that an awful lot of our people are working as hard or harder than they ever have without a raise. For about half of Americans their real incomes in terms of what it will buy have not gone up in more than a decade. Too many of our people have gone nearly two decades. And a lot of parents are beginning to wonder whether they'll be able to give their children a better standard of living than they enjoyed.

We know that our economy is becoming highly competitive, but that too many of our people are being downsized in their most productive years, and years when their families are most relying on them, when their children are being raised or when they're about to go off to college. And a lot to these folks have no real idea about how they're going to move in a reasonable time to another job doing as well as they were before. And we know that even though unemployment is below 6 percent and below the 25-year average unemployment rate of America, there are still too many urban neighborhoods and rural communities where there aren't enough jobs for young people to believe that they have a bright future.

If you look at the social front, who would have believed 3 years ago that we could bring

the crime rate down, but that random violence among juveniles, children under 18, would be going up? Who would believe that the drug usage among people between the age of 18 and 34 would be going down, but that casual drug use among children under 18, including—and illegal—tobacco smoking, even though it's illegal in every State in the country, would be going up?

How did this happen? The truth is, no one knows all the answers, but it is clear that a big part of it is that you and I are serving in public life at a time of very profound change; I would argue the most profound period of change in the last 100 years. You have to go back about 100 years to the time when Americans moved from living primarily in rural areas to living primarily in cities and towns, in the time when Americans moved from working primarily on the farm to working primarily in the factory or in businesses supporting factories.

That's what is happening today. We are moving from a national economy to a global economy. The nature of work is changing. Even manufacturing, which is still very strong—indeed, growing stronger in America—is becoming characterized more by information technology than by hard work in terms of muscle power.

Work now in almost every endeavor requires more mind and less muscle. More and more workplaces are less hierarchical, less bureaucratic, indeed, on average, less big. The average manufacturing facility contains 300 or fewer employees. So the work is changing, the workplace is changing, the markets are changing, and information is changing.

Bill Gates, the founder of Microsoft, in his book "The Road From Here" says that the digital chip is the biggest change in information technology in 500 years, since Gutenberg first printed the Bible in Europe. But this is the dimension of the change through which we are all living.

Now, on the whole, this change has been good for America. There are more possibilities open to young people to live out the future of their dreams than at any time in our Nation's history. But as with any time of change this profound, there is also a great uprooting, a great unsettling, where estab-

lished patterns of life and living and working together are disrupted. And when that happens, it is imperative that those of us who are charged with the public purpose, with bringing people together, with giving everybody a chance, work hard to see that we make these changes, that we go through this period of change in a way that gives every American the chance to be a full citizen living up to his or her full abilities. How we will master this moment of change is, therefore, the great question not only before the President and the Congress, not only before the business leaders of this country, but before every community leader in the United States of America.

In my State of the Union Address I outlined the seven great challenges that I think we have to meet as a people if we're going to fulfill those objectives that I brought to this office, if we're going to guarantee the American dream for all Americans, if we're going to maintain our world leadership for peace and freedom, if we're going to come back together around our basic values.

We have to build stronger families and better childhoods for all of our children. We have to open educational opportunities so that every child and every adult has access to world-class lifelong learning. We have to provide economic security for families who are willing to work for it. We must take back our streets, all our streets, from crime and gangs and drugs. We must provide a healthy and clean environment for today and tomorrow. We must maintain our leadership in the fight for freedom and democracy, because if we don't do that no one else will. And we must reinvent our Government so that it works better and once again inspires real trust in the American people. None of these things can be done unless we do them together, unless we understand that the old categories by which we thought and the old categories by which we classified one another have to have enough flexibility in them to allow us to reach out across the lines that divide us to meet these common challenges.

One of the things that we must do here in Washington is to understand that while we have an obligation to have a clear vision, to set clear national goals, to challenge people from every walk of life to meet these

goals, we cannot solve America's problems for America. We have to instead focus on giving individuals and families and neighborhoods and communities the tools they need to make the most of their own lives and to meet our common challenges. In other words, we need to focus as much as possible on the "what" America needs to do, and do as much as we can to let you and people like you all over America determine the "how"—how it will be done.

For more than 15 years now there has been a raging debate in our country about what the role of the Federal Government should be, and whether the Government was the problem instead of part of the solution. Well, we all know that the era of big Government is over. We're moving to a time when large bureaucracies are not only not necessary, they're not the most effective way of meeting our common challenges. But I submit to you that that does not mean that we can, under the guise of saying the Government is the problem, return to a time when all of our people were left to fend for themselves. That will not meet the challenges of today and tomorrow.

What works in the global economy is teamwork. What works in the global economy is getting diverse people together and finding out who has got what skills and figuring out how people can work together for their mutual benefit. Individuals can be fulfilled in this kind of world only when they are prepared to work with each other to help every one of them fulfill their God-given capacities. I believe that more strongly than anything else. If you ask me, what is the one most important lesson you have learned as President, I would say it is that we must go forward together. We cannot go back to the time when people were left to fend for themselves under the luxury of believing that anything we do together is wrong.

We do not need a big bureaucracy for every problem, but we don't want a weak Government. When I traveled to Washington and Oregon and Idaho, to Pennsylvania the other day to see the effects of the terrible flooding, no one wanted the Federal Emergency Management Agency to be weak; they wanted it to be quick.

When I see that for 15 years now, 15 years, the Fortune 500 companies have been reducing employment—this is not a recent development, but small businesses in America have been creating more jobs every year than big business is laying off. Indeed, in the last 3 years, businesses owned by women alone have created more jobs than the Fortune 500 have laid off. We do not need a weak Small Business Administration. It can be smaller, but it should be strong.

So what I'd like to do today is to talk about what your role is and what our role is and what we have to do together. The idea that Washington can actually solve all problems rather than empowering people and communities to solve their problem is moving rapidly away.

Just in the last 3 years, the size of your Federal Government has been reduced by 205,000 people. It is now the smallest it's been since 1965. By the end of this year, the Federal Government will be the smallest it's been since 1962. We are getting rid of 16,000 pages of Federal regulations. And as I'm sure Carol Browner told you before I came, we are trying to find more innovative ways to work in partnership not only with local government, but also with the private sector.

We have approved a record number of welfare reform waivers, 53 different projects for 37 States. We do need welfare reform legislation, but you should know that 10 million people, or almost three-quarters of all the people on welfare in the United States of America, are covered by welfare reform projects already approved by this administration in just the last 3 years.

I want to pass the right kind of welfare reform bill because I'd like to get out of the waiver business altogether. I don't want States or counties to have to come to Washington every time they want to try some new, innovative approach to moving people from welfare to work. We know essentially we're stuck with a system which was designed for a population different from the population now on welfare. We know that what welfare people want and need is the same thing that all of us are living with, which is they need to work, but they need to be successful parents. And one of the great challenges for

America is how every family can be successful in the home and at work.

Therefore, welfare reform should be tough on work and supportive of children, not weak on work to save money in the short run and tough on kids, but within those parameters and with the objective of moving everybody who can be moved into the workplace who can become independent, who can become self-supporting, who can communicate respect to their own children and help to raise their own children better. That is the kind of welfare reform we ought to have.

We passed the unfunded mandates law, which I know you all support. For years and years and years it was easy for Congress to cut taxes, cut spending, and just solve all the public problems by passing a mandate along to you. I remember when I was a Governor once I asked a Member of Congress in an election season—I said, which one would you rather be, a Member of Congress who cut taxes and cut spending, or a Governor who got a mandate and had to raise taxes and spending to meet an order from the Federal Government so that the responsibility was always different from who was actually carrying the burden of public persuasion. That's what the unfunded mandate law was all about and we did the right thing to pass it.

We've also given you new flexibility to build roads, to turn public housing projects into safe, affordable, mixed-income communities. The empowerment zone and enterprise community initiative has given Federal support to community-based reform. And I was in Michigan yesterday with the county executive there, Ed McNamara, and the mayor of Detroit, Dennis Archer, at one of our most successful endeavors. I want a second round of empowerment zones and enterprise communities. We need to keep doing this to give incentives to local people to work together to build their own futures. And we're just getting started.

We know that if we're going to continue doing what we've been doing and continue making progress, we have got to give more responsibility, not just in the State capitals but also in the county seats and the city halls of America where the rubber meets the road and the decisions must be made.

Let me talk just a minute about what I think we should be doing and then a little bit about what you and I have to do together for the future. First of all, we have to meet the continuing challenges of this economy. If I had told anybody 3 years ago that we'd have a 27-year low in the combined rates of unemployment and inflation and almost 8 million new jobs and a record number of new businesses and a 15-year high in homeownership, but half the American people would not have a raise and a lot of people would feel very uncertain in the downsizing, and some communities would be left out still of the new jobs, you would have found that hard to believe. It is because of the nature of the changes that are going on.

The answer is not to try to put a wall around America or turn around and run back into a past that we can never achieve again. The answer is to keep pushing until we get all the way through this period of change in a way that permits all Americans to win. That's exactly what we did the last time we went through a period of change like this. It took us decades before. I believe we can do it in less time now because the pace of change is so great.

But let's look at what we have to do. We have to have more growth to produce more good jobs and to spread that opportunity to more people, and to help people who lose their jobs move through the transition more quickly so that they can once again become productive and support their families and have the kind of self-respect every American deserves who is willing to work for it.

What should we do? Yesterday, I called on Congress to pass a growth agenda within 60 days to build on the work of the last 3 years. I won't go through it all now, but let me just mention two or three points. First of all, we ought to pass the right kind of balanced budget, and we ought to do it now.

The economic plan of 1993, though it was controversial, cut our deficit in half in 3 years, drove interest rates way down. What happened with low interest rates? That helped to bring about the homebuilding boom and the 15-year high in homeownership. That helped to increase incomes by cutting the costs Americans have for their car payments, their credit card payments, their

home mortgage payments. That helped to sustain a long period of growth.

If we can pass a balanced budget plan, we'll get interest rates down again, so that we'll not only be lifting the burden of debt off of future generations, we'll be giving the present economy the best stimulus it can have to grow and grow and grow. And that means people at your level will be able to pay tax revenues they get from earning more money to fund the county services that you all desperately need to provide.

But there is another issue in the budget that I know has already been discussed here. We're not only still negotiating over how to balance the budget for the next 7 years, we're still talking about finishing the budget work for this year, and that is very hard on you. You have to plan, after all, for daycare services, 911 lines, for jail cells. You have a road budget to meet. You have all of these things you have to do.

Without a national budget, you can't plan. you can't answer basic questions: What kind of resources can I count on to implement this initiative or that one? How much flexibility am I going to have to make this happen? It is unacceptable for America's counties, for America's cities, for America's States not to know what's coming at them. And the effects of this uncertainty are not good. I read the survey you released on Friday. A good many of you have had to postpone construction projects, reduce services, stop hiring. You're looking at higher costs across the board for health care, for welfare, for summer jobs programs.

Enough is enough. We cannot afford to have our counties stuck in suspended animation. You deserve to know what to expect. So I ask you to join with me in saying to the Congress, you're back in town, we've got to stop governing by continuing resolution. It's time to come together and pass a budget for this year. But also time to come together and pass a budget that will be in balance in 7 years.

We can do this. I want to make it clear to you that as a result of all the negotiations that went on in the previous months between the congressional leaders and the White House, we have now identified savings that are common to both the Republican plan and

my plan amounting to \$700 billion. That is more than enough to balance the budget, and done right, to protect Medicare and Medicaid; to protect our investments in the environment; to protect our investments in education; to avoid doing away with the summer jobs program, which I think would be a terrible mistake. It is also enough to provide a modest tax cut to families who have been struggling to stay ahead over the last several years, and to give what I think would be the best tax cut of all, a tax deduction for the cost of college education and all education expenses after high school.

But also remember it's important to balance the budget, which means that all of us, including the President, have to deal with cuts that we may not otherwise like to deal with, because if we balance the budget we get the interest rates down again, we keep the economy going, we keep creating jobs, we give incomes a chance to continue to rise. That is very, very important.

If you have any doubt about whether this can be done by Republicans and Democrats in this environment in an election year, I ask you just to look at what's happening today on Capitol Hill. Members of both parties, led by Senator Kassebaum of Kansas and Senator Kennedy of Massachusetts, are announcing a bipartisan commitment to pass historic legislation that will stop insurance companies from cutting off customers just because someone in the family gets sick or they change jobs. It is high time. This is something that we can do to increase access to all people to health care, a critical component of family security in the modern world. I applaud Congress for their commitment here, Republicans and Democrats alike. I look forward to signing the Kennedy-Kassebaum bill and I hope they will continue.

We've got 3 weeks until Congress takes a break for Easter. That's more than enough time to move ahead on health care reform and to pass the balanced budget. There are other things that I think should be done, including raising the minimum wage and other aspects of the economic growth issue. But just think what would happen if we could do this by Easter, just these two things, to pass that health care reform bill and to pass the balanced budget plan. Think of the con-

fidence, the spirit, the energy it would send throughout America. Think how people would feel differently about the ability of the Government to solve problems and the ability of the country to move forward and the ability of people in Washington to behave in a bipartisan, even a nonpartisan way, in the way that so many of you have to do, day-in and day-out.

We have to do this. But it is not enough. We also have to work with you in a partnership to meet the challenges that I outlined in the State of the Union. We're working together to strengthen America's families, by fighting to end the tragedy of domestic violence. Last month, as a part of our continuing effort, we set up a national domestic violence hotline. This will help, but it won't work alone.

Counties have a special role to play in this endeavor. Your police officers are the ones who respond to the desperate 911 call. Your judges are the ones who have to bring domestic abusers to justice. You have to make sure that members of your community and your officers of the law understand that this is a serious, serious problem in the United States. It can't be solved by simply taking repeated abusers out for a walk around the block to cool down. This is a crime where training and education that you can provide can truly make a difference, a huge difference in the quality of childhood and the quality of life in America. So I ask you to stand with hundreds of thousands of women who are battered each year, with the thousands and thousands of children that are abused, and say, "No more." I salute you for what you're doing, and I ask you for more.

We must bring the same spirit of partnership to our efforts to provide all Americans with the educational opportunities they need for this new era. Let's take the Goals 2000 education reform, for example. It says that we should have nationally competitive standards, standards that will stand us in good stead in the world, and that those standards are needed in a global economy, in the smallest rural community in my home State, and in the biggest cities of America. But it says that States and counties and school districts should agree to meet them, but should then

have the ability to decide on how to meet them.

Our administration is taking the lead in setting higher national standards in calling for measurable means for determining whether they're being met or not, but in giving more flexibility to local schools and local entities than ever before in determining how to achieve educational excellence. That is a partnership we must embrace with great fervor and with enough dedication that we will keep at it until the job is done.

Let me just give you one example. We're going to have to work together with the private sector to meet the important national goal of connecting every school and every library, every classroom and every library in America to the information superhighway by the year 2000. We have to do that. We at the national level can provide some seed money and some real influence in terms of reaching out to people everywhere to try to help them contribute. But you have to do that as well. People in the private sector in every State and county and community in America are eager to help.

Just later this week I am going out to California where, on one day, we will connect 20 percent of the classrooms in the State to the Internet in 58 separate counties. That's the downpayment on something that must sweep America in the next couple of years. We have to work together to clean the environment. And I won't repeat anything that Carol Browner said, but you and I know we have to be partners, whether it's in dealing with the Superfund issue or other challenges facing us.

I want to thank this group for the work you did in our development of a sustainable development plan for the future of America. You were consulted, you were involved, and I appreciate it. I was so glad to see one of the officers holding the report when I came in the door today. We have to do this together. We have to disabuse our people of the notion that you have to grow the economy by weakening the environment, and that we have to choose a good job over clean air, clean water, and a safe future.

The truth is, over the long run we cannot grow the economy unless we preserve the environment. And you and I have to take the

lead in doing that. We have to help working Americans become winners in this time of economic change. I suppose I've spent more time in community colleges than any President in history. I've done it because I believe that they symbolize the kind of institutions that America needs more of if we're going to solve our problems: community placed, driven by the needs of the moment, susceptible and flexible to the personal needs and desires of the individual students; not political in a negative sense, but political in a positive sense, in the sense that most of them are highly influential in terms of getting the resources and the support they need from the public and private sector to drive on into a better future. That's what we need more of.

And that's why I've challenged Congress to collapse 70 separate overlapping training programs into a single voucher worth \$2,600 a year that we can just mail to anyone as soon as they lose their job, and say, here, take this to your local educational institution and get back to work by learning and moving to a better future, not a darker one. That is the sort of support that we all need to give.

And, finally, let me say that we have had a remarkable partnership through the crime bill, a crime bill that was written after 6 years of haggling, and passed in 1994 largely through the influence of local law enforcement officials; a bill that provides funds for police, for punishment, and for prevention; a bill that is helping to move 100,000 police officers on the street. We are ahead of schedule and under budget in that endeavor because local law enforcement officials know how badly we need more police officers in community policing settings.

I am proud to say that this approach is working all over the country. I see rates of crime coming down: violent crime, property crimes, all kinds of crimes. But we have not succeeded and we cannot believe we have succeeded just because the crime rate is going down, first, because the crime rate among juveniles is going up; and, secondly, because we all know this country still has too many streets, too many neighborhoods, too many schools that are too dangerous and too violent. And we have to keep at it.

We cannot tolerate any attempt to repeal the crime bill and to move away from strategies that we know are working to lower the crime rate. I ask for your support to put more police officers on the street, to keep those prevention programs, and to stand up for giving America a future when we will once again be surprised when we turn on the television and see that a terrible crime has been committed. You want to know when we'll win the battle against crime? When you're surprised when you turn on the evening news and you read about some violent, outrageous, unforgivable act.

Sustained growth, a balanced budget, stronger families, safer streets, a cleaner environment, better education, welfare reform, health care for those who need it most; we can do all these things if we will do them together. You know, I know that a lot of people are so bewildered by the things that are going on in the world today, and I know that it is easy to get disheartened. And I read from time to time about how people have gone from being skeptical to being cynical. But I say to you, my fellow Americans, that is a luxury we cannot afford. If you went to work cynical every day it would be an excuse for you to do nothing, and soon you would be out of a job.

The only people in this country who can't be fired in their roles are citizens. The Constitution gives our citizens the right to vote or the right not to vote; the right to say what they believe or the right to keep silent. And, therefore, they ultimately have the right, if they choose, to be cynical. But I want to tell you something: This is a very great country. Most people in the world would still give anything to have the opportunities Americans have. Most wealthy countries in the world would give anything to be able to see a private sector vital enough to create the kind of jobs that have been created in this economy. And all the problems we have are simply because we are fortunate enough to be living at the time of most profound change this country has endured in 100 years.

Now, there are problems associated with that change. There is no change that is painless, ever. There never has been and there never will be. There is no such thing as a painless, consequence-free period of change.

But we should rejoice that we have been given the opportunity to serve the public at this moment in our history. And one of the things that you can do, because you are so close to the people, is to go back home and say, look, there is nothing facing this country we can't handle if we'll work together; and cynicism is a poor excuse for inaction and is the only thing that will determine our failure.

All my life I have believed it was wrong, fundamentally wrong, for any human being to be denied the opportunity to make the most of his or her own life. That is fundamentally what public life is all about. That is what your work is all about; that is what my work is all about. And a big part of that is involving our citizens in the process of getting through this period of change and transformation.

I believe if we do that the years ahead of us will be America's best years. And if we do it, you can take a full measure of pride and credit in that magnificent endeavor.

Thank you, and God bless you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:05 a.m. at the Washington Hilton and Towers Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Douglas Bovin, president, and Michael Hightower, president-elect, National Association of Counties; and Carol M. Browner, Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency.

## Remarks to the People of Israel

March 5, 1996

Good evening, and thank you, Ms. Dayan, for inviting me to speak to the people of Israel at this very difficult moment.

Over the last week the world has watched in horror as scores of innocent Israeli citizens have been murdered by suicide bombers. On behalf of the American people, I want to express my deepest sorrow and strongest outrage to the people of Israel and especially to the families and friends of the victims. As I have told Prime Minister Peres, I share your determination to do everything possible to bring this horror to an end and to bring those responsible to justice.

These fanatical acts are aimed not just at killing innocent people but at killing the growing hope for peace in the Middle East. Those responsible for these vicious crimes